

News and Information

From the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs

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**For Immediate Release
May 17, 2001**

**Contact:
David McCollum
Chris Allen**

**Weekly Column by David McCollum, Director
Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs
Volume 1, Issue 17**

Wrong Numbers on Repair Calls Can Cost You

You bought a brand new clothes dryer last month, but this week's laundry is still soaking wet after an hour of tumbling in the machine. You're not happy, but at least it's under warranty. You flip open the phone book to call the company that made the dryer and dial the number you find there. The next day, an unmarked truck or van pulls into your driveway, so you let the repairman in, and he fixes the dryer.

On his way out, the repairman hands you an invoice for \$200. Your jaw drops. "This machine is under warranty," you say. "Not by us," he replies, pointing to the company name on the top of the invoice. You grab your glasses and take a second look at that company name.

It isn't the company that made the appliance, but the name is very similar. So similar, in fact, that it would have appeared in the phone book right above the name of the company you intended to call. You dialed the wrong number, and now it's going to cost you. Not only do you owe the repairman for his work, but you may have invalidated your warranty by having an unauthorized person work on the appliance.

Some repair companies intentionally place listings in the white pages under names that will fall right above major appliance company listings. Often, you will find the same number listed with different company names. The company is probably forwarding the calls from a local number to an out-of-state call center. That company has an agreement with a local repairman working under a generic company name. When you call the number, a person answers, "Service." If you don't ask specifically, you won't be told the name of the company, and you will have no way of knowing whether or not their repairmen are licensed or if they are authorized to service your appliance.

When you call for appliance service, be certain you are dialing the correct number, then ask what company you have reached. Discuss what is covered under your warranty and the possible cost of repairs before the repairman comes to your home. He may not be able to give complete details without looking at the machine, so be sure that you are home to authorize any unexpected work.

If you have questions or concerns about repair companies or any other consumer issues, contact the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-342-8385 or visit www.state.tn.us/consumer.